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AN
EXAMINATION
OF THE
AGE OF REASON,
BY THOMAS PAINE:

THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

WITH AN
APPENDIX
OF
REMARKS ON A LETTER
FROM
DAVID ANDREWS:

BY GILBERT WAKEFIELD, B.A.
Late Fellow of Jesus-College, Cambridge.

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,
Quo me cunque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes.

HOR.

A little Learning is a dangerous Thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring.
There shallow Draughts intoxicate the Brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.

POPE.

LONDON:
SOLD BY KEARSLEY, NO. 46, FLEET-STREET, AND
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1794.



“ I persuade myself, that the life and faculties of man, at the best but
“ short and limited, cannot be employed more rationally than in the
“ search of knowledge; and especially of that sort, which relates to our
“ duty, and conduces to our happiness. In these inquiries therefore,
“ wherever I perceive any glimmering of truth before me, I readily pur-
“ sue, and endeavour to trace it to it's source: without any reserve or
“ caution of pushing the discovery too far, or opening too great a glare of
“ it to the public. I look upon the discovery of any thing which is true,
“ as a valuable acquisition to society; which cannot possibly hurt or ob-
“ struct the good effect of any other truth whatsoever: for they all par-
“ take of one common essence, and necessarily coincide with each other;
“ and like the drops of rain, which fall separately into the river, mix
“ themselves with the stream, and strengthen the general current.”

Dr. Middleton.

THE

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AN
EXAMINATION
OF THE
AGE OF REASON, &c.

THAT the former writings of *Thomas Paine* abound with indications of original conception and profound thought, of comprehension and sagacity, far beyond the vigour of ordinary minds, no man, I presume, of established character for intelligence and integrity, will venture to deny. To the authority of venal sycophants, and all the retainers of corrupt and wicked systems, whether in *politics* or *religion*, who have sold themselves to professional hostility with reformers and reformation, no competency can be allowed for a decision on this subject: but, on the contrary, the virulence of their abuse is in itself no unequivocal
B symptom

symptom of extraordinary merit: just as the screams and tumult of the feathered tribe prove some bird of nobler presence and more ample pinion to be at hand *. The work, which I have undertaken to examine, is entitled to particular respect, not only from the genius of the author, but also from the singular circumstances of it's composition. It may justly be regarded as the effusion of a pregnant intellect, sobered by the meditations of a solitary prison: nor unattended probably by some apprehensions of such a finishing catastrophe, as a crisis of things so novel and eventful may daily and hourly be expected to produce in *France*. The reflections, therefore, of such a season, from such a man, of so popular a name, on a subject of universal interest, is secure, we may presume, of considerable attention in this country; from those at least who are nobly occupied in the discussion of their *civil* and *religious creed*: a number, which has certainly increased of late with surprising rapidity, and will, I hope and believe, go on encreasing with an accelerated progress. Knowledge, no less than righteousness, is the glorious luminary, " that shineth more and

* ——— λαβροι

παγγλωσσια, κορακις ως,

ακραντα γαρυετον

Διος προς ορνιχα θυον. Pindar, Ol. ii. 156.

“ more unto perfect day.” On this account, I conceived myself not unlikely to serve the cause of revealed truth, with manly and unprejudiced enquirers, by an examination of a deistical pamphlet, which seemed so fair a candidate for extensive circulation: and I was willing to provide as early as possible the best antidote in my power against a delicious poison, secure of an easy insinuation into the hearts of men, not only from an eagerness for novelty, characteristic of the age, but from an indolent acquiescence in superficial intelligence with respect to this subject. For, surely by a strange perversity, whilst natural philosophy, politics, and morals, are pursued with unremitting diligence of investigation; Revelation alone seems an object of inferior consideration: her evidences, it is conceived, may be decided upon without learning, her pretensions judged without, discussion, or rather disregarded altogether, as unworthy the notice of the profound philosophers of modern times. And I felt the more inclination to this task, not from an arrogant persuasion of superior knowledge and abilities, but from a clear conviction, that *Christianity* CANNOT be vindicated adequately and consistently against *Deism* by any votary of *systems* and *establishments**;

* See some very just remarks to this effect, in *Godwin's Political Justice*, vol. i. p. 61.

well aware in the mean time, that all my zeal for *Christianity* will not screen me from the malice and virulence of those, who love *church-emoluments* better than *scripture truth**; because opportunities will and must arise of exposing the trumpery and nonsense of *ecclesiastics*.

The time is come, when all our opinions must be tried at the touchstone of severe enquiry: and, if the *Jewish* and *Christian* Revelations cannot support themselves against the batteries of their assailants, in the estimation of capable and disinterested judges, their out-posts must be abandoned, and a retreat secured to the fortresses of *deism*, already occupied by the patriarchs of old, and the illustrious philosophers of classic times. The sway of *creeds* and *councils*, of *hierarchies* and *churches*, whether *Protestant* or *Popish*, over the bodies and consciences of men, is diminishing apace: and the temple of Revelation, deprived of the mouldering props, which priestcraft, and tyranny, and ignorant superstition had framed for

* In this view, as devoted to a system, and most intemperate calumniators of those, who differ from them, merely because they differ; the editor, and the two principal writers in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, must be deemed by inquisitive men of every opinion, as three of the sublimest profligates, with respect to intellectual probity, that can possibly exist, and abhorred, as such, by every lover of truth and honour.

it's support, must repose solely, if it can repose on it's proper basis, the adamant of TRUTH.

After premising a short, but honest and spirited introduction, explanatory of his motives to this work, our ingenuous author delivers his creed:

“ I believe in one God, and no more; and I
“ hope for happiness beyond this life.”

I join the writer in assent to both these articles of faith. That *Creed of Christian Churches*, which acknowledges *Jesus Christ* to be *God*, and the *Holy Spirit* to be *God*; (one, by his own confession, like ourselves, and subject to all the constitutional weaknesses of mortality, to pain and death; and the other, a mere periphrastical form of speech, derived from a circumstance, essentially connected with human life, and thence made, by a common substitution, characteristic of *divine energy* and of *God himself* *) that *Creed*, I say, is a fundamental violation of all theology; a most gross and hideous doctrine, alike unknown to the *Heathens* and the *Jews*, and contemplated with abhorrence by the followers of *Moses* from it's first propagation to this very day: a doctrine, inconsistent with the

* See a note in my commentary on St. Matthew, chap. i. ver. 18.

plainest repeated declarations of *Christ* himself and his apostles; a doctrine, which no *human* testimony whatever could render credible for a moment, because a contradiction to *divine*; a doctrine, which must ever shock and disgust unprejudiced and disinterested examination; and which, therefore, will happily prove a mill-stone on the neck of all *political* establishments of *christianity*, and overwhelm them in perdition*.

Our author thus proceeds in his confession:
 “ I believe the equality of man; and I believe
 “ that religious duties consist in doing justice,
 “ loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our
 “ fellow-creatures happy.”

All diversity of *civil privileges* and *titular distinctions*; all *inequality*, but the transient and ca-

* This conversion, however, of God to man and from man back again to God, is more tolerable than the *Popish* metamorphose; as the reader may judge from *Oldham's* statement of the case:

Hey jingo, Sirs! What's this? 'Tis bread you see.

Presto be gone! 'Tis now a deity.

Two grains of dough, with cross, and stamp of priest,
 And five small words pronounc'd, make up their Christ.

To this they all fall down, this all adore,

And strait devour what they ador'd before;

Down goes the tiny favour at a bit,

To be digested, and at length b——.

From altar to close-stool, or jake prefer'd:

First wafer, then a god, and then a t——.

ful inequality produced by personal exertion, public benefit, and private worth, moral or intellectual, is destitute of even the shadow of support, certainly from *reason*, and no less from *nature* and *revelation*. We are all confessedly children alike of one common FATHER: and *Jesus* of *Nazareth* allowed no pre-eminence among his disciples, but that of mutual subjection, condescending service, profound humility, and self-abasement*; of which lowly virtues he proposed himself as a complete invariable example. It requires but a trivial portion of sagacity to discover, that certain orders and descriptions of frail creatures, (to propose the objection in the least compass and the most general terms) encompassed with every inducement to be corrupt *themselves*, and plentifully furnished with every means of corrupting *others*, cannot be peculiarly calculated to promote the general happiness of mankind: and this happiness we are compelled to regard as the prime object of the divine administration. Such policy can only be suited to man in imperfection and immaturity. It was a beautiful sentiment of Plato†, that “the
 “ affairs of states would never be well conducted,
 “ ’till philosophers were kings, or kings philoso-

* Matthew, xx. 25—29. Romans, xii. 2. Ephesians, v. 21.
 † Peter, v. 5.—† Dial. v. de Republicâ.

“ phers.” He, who vindicates corruption in society, and discountenances a progress to all perfection, of which humanity is capable, from the stale topic of the inevitable depravity of human beings, discourages every effort for virtuous pre-eminence, degrades the dignity of our nature, libels his species, and thwarts the measures of God’s government itself. *Christians* at least might be expected to bestow some readiness in their attempts at conformity to the injunctions of their divine teacher, by striving to be *perfect**, and *thoroughly furnished unto all good works*: by “leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and going on unto *perfection* §||.” In our present state of embarrassment and degradation, from a thousand causes originating in government and education, it were presumptuous ignorance, bordering on profaneness and impiety, to prescribe a limit to the capacities of mortality, either

* Philippians, iii. 12. 2 Tim. iii. 17. § Hebrews, vi. 1.

|| A respectable friend laught at such ideas, as *universal peace and harmony* among men, &c. in a late conversation with him. The same principles would have led him to laugh at *Christ* himself, when he said to his disciples; “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven is perfect.*” “A fine doctrine truly! for a man to strive after the perfection of his Maker! What a visionary wrong-headed reformer have we here!” my friend must have remarked on that occasion. No, no: man will be wicked; and the present most *excellent constitution* of things must be supported!

in moral or intellectual exertion. He at least cannot be deemed *unfriendly* to his species, or contemptuous to the Divinity, who, conforming to the dictates of Revelation, reflects with a degree of holy reverence on the workmanship of God, on the rational image of his Creator.

Then comes the *negative* confession of our patriot: "I do not believe in the creed professed
 " by the Jewish church, by the Roman church,
 " by the Greek church, by the Turkish church,
 " by the Protestant church, nor by any church
 " that I know of. My own mind is my own
 " church."

This too may be conceded, if by "the creed
 " of the Jewish church" be intended the mass
 of cabalistic doctrines; and by "the creed of the
 " Protestant church," be meant that monstrous
 farrago of absurdities and contradictions, concentrated, with most ingenious and comprehensive
 brevity, in the *creeds* denominated the *Athanasian*
 and *Nicene*; which, without the expedient of repeating backwards, would

_____ "with a vengeance send,
 " From Media post to Egypt*."

* Paradise L. st. iv. 170.

a much more untractable dæmon than Asmodeus*: or, if some clauses even of the *Apostle's creed* were intended by our author, his demur may be indulged: clauses, which may be found indeed in the *liturgies of established churches*, that make no scruple of sending even Christ to *hell*; but are certainly not "written in the book of life."

"All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit."

A just remark, concisely and pregnantly expressed. *National churches* are that *hay and stubble*†, which might be removed without any dif-

* The creed of the holy *Bishop Athanasius*, 'till I am better informed, is of too hard a digestion for my charity. *Dryden's* preface to his *Religio Laici*. The late editor of *Mr. Townson's* posthumous works, who was indeed very valuable both as a man and a divine, (*Mr. Townson* I mean) tells us, with great complacency, that his late friend regarded this creed "as a very *fine* composition"—in "a language *clear* and unequivocal."

If a man chooses to make himself ridiculous, e'en let him: but why should he wish to expose his friend?

ω ταν, ταν, ποιον σε επως φυνεν ιερως οδοντων;

The spear of argument has been long brandished in vain: it is time to see, whether the shafts of ridicule can pierce the tough thick hide of *ecclesiastical stubbornness* and obduracy.

† 1 Corinthians, iii. 12.

ficulty

ficulty or even danger of confusion, from the fabric of religion, by the gentle hand of reformation, but which the infatuation of *ecclesiastics* will leave to be destroyed *by fire**. *National churches* are that impure incrustation, which has enveloped, by gradual concretion, the diamond of *Christianity*; nor can, I fear, for the reason just now stated, the genuine lustre be recovered, but by such violent effort of restitution, as the separation of substances, so long and closely connected, must inevitably require †.

Nor can I forbear the quotation of another paragraph, replete with manly sense and dignified morality, conveyed in simple but energetic language, though not immediately pertinent to the discussion, which I have in view; especially as fewer occasions of approbation and coincidence will be presented in our progress through the pamphlet.

* 1 Corinthians, iii. 13.

† “ Sir Isaac Newton had a very sagacious conjecture, which he told to Dr. Clarke, from whom I received it, that the overbearing tyranny and persecuting power of the antichristian party, which hath so long corrupted Christianity, and enslaved the Christian world, must be put a stop to, and broken to pieces by the prevalence of infidelity, for some time, before primitive Christianity could be restored; which seems to be the very means that is now working in Europe, for the same good and great end of Providence.” *Whiston's Essay on the Revelations*, 2d edit. p. 321.

“ It is necessary to the happiness of man that
 “ he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity
 “ does not consist in believing or in disbelieving :
 “ it consists in professing to believe what he does
 “ not believe :” (or rather, what he has no reason,
 from previous investigation, to believe, and
 admit as true.)

“ It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief,
 “ if I may so express it, that mental lying has pro-
 “ duced in society. When a man has so far cor-
 “ rupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind,
 “ as to subscribe his professional belief to things he
 “ does not believe, he has prepared himself for
 “ the commission of every other crime. He takes
 “ up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain; and
 “ in order to *qualify* himself for that trade, he be-
 “ gins with a perjury. Can we conceive any
 “ thing more destructive to morality than this?

These very rational and most important obser-
 vations are applicable in the fullest latitude to the
subscriptions and confessions exacted from young
 men at our *Universities* for *degrees*, and from the
 candidates for the ministry in the *Church of Eng-
 land*, and among some *dissenters*. It is a most
 shocking reflection to every lover of truth and
 honesty, that a requisition to acknowledge a mul-
 titudinous mass of *theological* and *political* pro-
 positions, denominated *articles of religion*, which
 many

many have never read, which they, who read, cannot understand, and which the imposers of them have never yet been able to expound with an uniformity of interpretation; that an assent, I say, to such a monstrous, inexplicable, and unintelligible hodge-podge of scholastic reveries, should be made an indispensable condition to the privilege of preaching the *truths* of *Christianity*; nay, the basis of that *preaching*, and the criterion of those *truths*. The simplicity and sincerity of the gospel cannot fail of furtherance and support, beyond all controversy, from those delightful advocates, who begin their godly functions in such proofs of veneration for veracity and the solemnity of oaths! who thus bind their understandings, as it were, to the belief of certain tenets, manufactured and imposed by others: and thereby preclude themselves (in addition to that indirect impediment in the way of acquiring truth, interposed by this unequivocal declaration of indifference to her interests) from pursuing their theological enquiries beyond the limits assigned in *councils*, *synods*, and *parliaments* of former days, by an express obligation not to exceed the knowledge of their forefathers, nor to dispute their opinions, whether true or false*. I cannot myself conceive a case, not merely more outrageously soloecifical, but more palpably immoral and in-

* It is, in fact, to write over the portico of the church,

μηδεις καθαροκαρδιος, μηδ' ελευθερογνωμων εισιτω.

defensible

defensible in every view ; nor can we be surpris'd at a plenteous harvest of *unbelievers* in a vineyard cultivated by labourers of this complexion.

“ Every national church or religion has establish-
 “ ed itself by pretending some special mission from
 “ God communicated to certain individuals. The
 “ Jews have their Moses ; the Christians their Jesus
 “ Christ, their apostles and saints ; and the Turks
 “ their Mahomet ; as if the way to God was not
 “ open to every man alike.”

This statement is not only vague and frivolous, but nonsensical and erroneous in the extreme. The system of *Jesus Christ* proceeds upon the very supposition, here instituted as in direct contradiction to it, that “ the way to God is open to every man alike ;” which might be proved, as every body knows, by many passages of most explicit purport in the *Christian* Scriptures. What the *Jews* and *Christians* maintain in behalf of their respective systems, is simply this : That their founders delivered to mankind most rational sentiments of the Divine Nature, of his existence, and his providential government of the world, at a time, when ignorance and depravation, with respect to these fundamental canons of religious rectitude, were almost universally predominant, even among the superiour and most enlightened portion of mankind at large. With relation to the writings of the *Jews*, it is altogether undeniable, and is
 a truth

a truth of the utmost weight and magnitude, the force of which no sophistry can baffle, and no scepticism can elude, that our accumulated discoveries in science and philosophy, and all our progress in other parts of knowledge, has not enabled the wisest of the moderns to excel the noble sentiments conveyed in the didactic and devotional compositions, of the *Old Testament*; compositions, many of which existed, without dispute, long before the earliest writings of heathen antiquity, and at a period, when even those illustrious instructors of mankind, the *Greeks* and *Romans*, were not only strangers to *alphabetic characters*, but wholly barbarous and unknown. It would gratify me much, I confess, to be informed by some of our philosophical *literati*, in what manner these contemners of the *Jews*, and of the *Mosaic* system, can account for this singular *phænomenon*: which indeed might be stated with abundantly more fullness and cogency, if it were necessary on this occasion. Has *Thomas Paine* the *deist*, or any of our modern *atheists*, the intrepidity to undertake a solution of this, surely highly interesting, problem in the history of the human mind? Besides; let any man compare the simple morality and the noble precepts of the Gospel, as they relate to the attributes of God and the duties of humanity, with the monstrous theology, with the subtleties and the contradictory schemes, of contemporary moralists among the *Greeks* and *Romans* (who

(who nevertheless had, in all probability, profited mediately or immediately by the *Jewish* system, which could not exist, like a light shining in a dark place*, without diffusing some influence through the neighbourhood) and reflect at the same time, that a perfect manual of morality may be collected from a few pages in the Gospel, but must be picked in *Pagan* writers from a multitude of discordant volumes and a mass of incoherency and absurdity: and then condescend to furnish us with an explanation of what must be allowed on all hands a most surprising fact; namely, the existence of such superior intelligence in a *Jewish* carpenter at *Nazareth*. So then, though we concede to Mr. *Paine*, that "the way to God was open to every man alike," we affirm of the *Jewish* and *Christian* dispensations, that *they* only were *this way* to any man desirous of entertaining rational notions of God and human duty. Without the illumination, which has been distributed through the world from these dispensations†, *Thomas Paine*, and other *deists* of our own and succeeding ages, who fancy themselves so very philosophical and intelligent

* 2 Pet. i. 19.

† See the note at p. 193, of *Bishop Law's Considerations* 7th edition: a publication, which may be recommended both for its own excellence, and the store of references, on every topic connected with the *evidences of revelation*, to the best authors, ancient and modern.

in their theology, would have known full as little of the matter, to speak with moderation, as much wiser heads than their's, among the illustrious nations of antiquity, deprived of these advantages, so much contemned and so ungratefully enjoyed ! Very few philosophers indeed, in all probability, (if one) have illuminated mankind with light unborrowed from the candles of the sanctuary. Now our inference from these indubitable positions is clearly, *some* degree of supernatural communication, which we stile *Revelation*, to the founders of *Judaism* and *Christianity*, *Moses* and *Jesus* ; and the denial of such communication leaves a problem, I apprehend, of much more arduous solution ; but which we may now expect the wonderful disciples of modern reason to explain in a way, that will leave no further difficulties on the question. Upon the subject of the *Turks* and their *Coran*, ranked in the same class by *Mr. Paine* with *Judaism* and the *Gospel*, it is needless to waste a syllable. *Mahomet* set out on the supposition of what he could not controvert, "the divine mission of *Jesus* : " without which he probably would not have left behind him a single profelyte. So that all arguments derived from the speedy propagation, great extent, or other circumstances of *Mahometanism*, to the prejudice of *Christianity*, are inapplicable and absurd.

“ As it is necessary to affix right ideas to words,
 “ I will, before I proceed further into the subject,
 “ offer some observations on the word *revelation*.
 “ Revelation, when applied to religion, means
 “ something communicated *immediately* from God
 “ to man.

“ No one will deny or dispute the power of the
 “ Almighty to make such a communication if he
 “ pleases. But, admitting for the sake of a case,
 “ that something has been revealed to a certain
 “ person, and not revealed to any other person, it
 “ is revelation to that person only. When he
 “ tells it to a second person, a second to a third,
 “ a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be
 “ a revelation to all those persons. It is revela-
 “ tion to the first person only, and *hearsay* to every
 “ other ; and consequently, they are not obliged
 “ to believe it.”

This statement also is inaccurate, fallacious,
 and inconclusive. But let us see, if we can ex-
 hibit a rational and unexceptionable representa-
 tion of the point in question. A revelation is
 made to *one* person in the first instance ; *Moses*, for
 example. He communicates this revelation to
 a *second* party, his countrymen, the children of
Israel. But, I ask, does *Moses* expect the *Jews*
 to believe this message on a *mere assertion*, so that
 their

their assent may be justly stiled a *hearsay* revelation? No such thing. He delivers his *credentials* with the message, and sanctions his pretensions to a prophetic character by some display of supernatural agency. Whether such display were in reality made in the case before us, by *Moses* to the *Israelites*, is not now the question: I am only attempting to exhibit the proposition in it's proper form, and stating the fact, as it exists, whether authentically, or otherwise, in the *Mosaic* history: and hence, I think, it is abundantly manifest, that *Mr. Paine's* notions of the character and condition of the *Jewish* and *Christian* revelations are so confused, so crude and undigested, as to render his account altogether unsuitable to the purpose in view, and most effectually impertinent. And this answer, I apprehend, will serve for all contained in the succeeding paragraphs quoted below; which are also perfectly puerile and foreign to the subject; a mere inapplicable figment of our author's bewildered imagination, and incapable of reduction to any form, that will admit legitimate discussion.

“ It is a contradiction in terms and ideas to call
 “ any thing a revelation that comes to us at second
 “ hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation
 “ is necessarily limited to the first communication.
 “ After this it is only an account of something

“ which that person says was a revelation made to
“ him; and though he may find himself obliged
“ to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to
“ believe it in the same manner; for it was not a
“ revelation made to *me*, and I have only his word
“ for it that it was made to *him*.

“ When Moses told the children of Israel that
“ he received the two tables of the commandments
“ from the hand of God, they were not obliged
“ to believe him, because they had no other au-
“ thority for it than his telling them so; and I
“ have no other authority for it than some histo-
“ rian telling me so: the commandments carrying
“ no internal evidence of divinity with them.
“ They contain some good moral precepts, such
“ as any man qualified to be a law-giver or a le-
“ gislator could produce himself, without having
“ recourse to supernatural intervention.”

In a note our author subjoins a farcaetical re-
flection, with which his fancy seems not a little
tickled; and he proposes it accordingly with an
air of self-complacency and exultation.

“ It is, however, necessary to except the de-
“ claration, which says, that God *visits the sins of*
“ *the fathers upon the children*. It is contrary to
“ every principle of moral justice.”

But

But what in reality can possibly be more feeble and inefficient than this objection*? The belief and worship of one true God, in opposition to a plurality of divinities and the vanities of idolatry, is the root of all genuine religion; and pushes forth that stem, upon which every moral and social duty, as I feel myself compelled to conclude, must be engrafted. Now, it is most notorious, mankind are so entirely the creatures of imitation, association, and habit, that a general prevalence of a false principle in one age has an obvious and unavoidable tendency to transmit this principle, with accumulated error and aggravation, to the age immediately succeeding†. But history and experience uniformly ascertain, that, while individuals go unpunished, large societies and communities of men at least (and to the *Jews* in their *national* capacity were these commandments given) are, in the regular course of divine administration, chastised for their crimes, in consequence of the eternal alliance and inseparable connection between vice and suffering: yet these crimes are not

* ——— telumque imbelle sine ictu
Conjicit: rauco quod protenus ære repulsum,
Et summo clipei nequicquam umbone pependit.

Virg. *Æn.* ii.

† So *Horace*, Ode iii. 6. 46.

Ætas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores; mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosorem.

their

their own crimes merely, but the aggregate wickedness of *themselves* and their *progenitors*. And with unfeigned sorrow do I regret, that *Thomas Paine* should himself be a standing evidence of this immutable dispensation; whilst he lies languishing in prison for an accidental attachment to the *Brissotine* faction, without one personal or political immorality to justify so harsh a treatment*.

Our author proceeds: " When also I am told
 " that a woman, called the Virgin Mary, said, or
 " gave out, that she was with child without any
 " cohabitation with a man, and that her betrothed
 " husband, Joseph, said, that an angel told him
 " so, I have a right to believe them or not: such
 " a circumstance required a much stronger evidence
 " than their bare word for it: but we have
 " not even this; for neither Joseph nor Mary
 " wrote any such matter themselves. It is only
 " reported by others that *they said so*. It is hear-

* This doctrine " of visiting the sins of the fathers upon the
 " children" was seen and acknowledged by the *heathen* moralists.
 So *Horace*, Od. iii. 8. 1.

Delicta majorum immeritus lues,
 Romane, donec templa refeceris,
 Ædesque labentes deorum, et
 Fœda nigro simulachra fumo.

" say

“ say upon hearsay, and I do not choose to rest
 “ my belief upon such evidence.”

* These difficulties I concede to the *deist*, for my own part, in all their force ; they are pertinent in themselves, and of serious significancy to those whom they may concern : but as the immaculate conception of *Jesus* by the *Holy Spirit* constitutes no *essential* article of *my* creed, and certainly rests on much weaker evidence, than any other important fact of all the gospels, I leave the vindication of it to the orthodox sons of the establishment. In the mean time, as one defect of demonstration* has not impaired the general truth of the *Newtonian philosophy*, not even in the case of that particular doctrine, the propagation of *sounds* ; so an occasional interpolation of one or two groundless and degrading circumstances will not invalidate the general evidences of *Christianity*. These evidences repose on a much broader and firmer basis than that of detached facts, knavish impositions on the superstitious, and unnecessary miracles : even on the immutability of *human feeling* and *human intellect*. For the same reason, I shall not scruple to pass unnoticed the subsequent paragraphs of our antagonist, which direct their attacks, and not impertinently, on the wretched

* *Mathemat. Princip. Philos. Nat. lib. ii. prop. 47.*

materials heaped up, for the security of usurped dominion and secular interest, by the hands of *priests* and *devotees*: a tribe of *Christians*, as far as their *sentiments* are concerned, holden by *Mr. Paine* and myself in equal estimation: for the *persons* of all mankind shall be *dear*, as *fellow-mortals*; and *sacred*, as representatives of the *Divinity*.

“ Nothing that is here said can apply, even with
 “ the most distant disrespect, to the *real* character
 “ of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an
 “ amiable man. The morality that he preached
 “ and practised was of the most benevolent kind;
 “ and though similar systems of morality had been
 “ preached by Confucius, and by some of the
 “ Greek philosophers, many years before; by the
 “ Quakers since, and by many good men in all
 “ ages; it has not been exceeded by any.”

Of these remarks, the former part is amiably candid; the latter, was never surpassed in ignorance and absurdity. The *Quakers* undoubtedly, take them all in all, are, as a PRACTICAL SOCIAL body, on account of their *pacific* principles, the most respectable of all the religious sects that have come to my knowledge; but what can be more supremely ridiculous, than to exemplify *their* morality in contradistinction to that of the *gospel*; when they are one and the same? To say,

say, moreover, of the *Christian* system merely, that " it has not been exceeded by any systems ancient or modern," is such a misconception, as candour will choose to impute, not to malignant disparagement of it's merits, but to an ignorance rather of the philosophical systems of antiquity, and the comparative purity of evangelical morality; a subject, which, I fear, *Mr. Paine* has not examined with a minuteness and scrupulosity, that will authorise to a conscientious reasoner such peremptory decision on the case.

I could wish, that those heavenly maxims of *Solon* and the son of *Sirach*, *Know thyself*,—and, *Understand first and then rebuke*; were stamped with deeper impresson on the hearts and memories of us all: that we might not, with such blameable precipitation, impose upon ourselves *conceit* for *knowledge*; upon our readers, *sophistry* for *argument*, and *dogmatism* for *intelligent* and *laborious conviction*. The creeds of the nurse, and the dreams of vanity, are alike disgraceful to rational intelligence.

We are now arrived at much the most important parts of our author's production; to which I shall endeavour to reply directly, intelligibly, and without evasion: and, if I should prove unable to vindicate my faith in *Christianity* upon principles truly reasonable and unambiguously explicit, I

E

will

will be content to relinquish it altogether, and look for an asylum in the *deism* of *Thomas Paine*, or the *calm philosophy* of *David Hume*.

“ Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or any thing else. Not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people; and as to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians having brought him into the world in a supernatural manner, were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story must have fallen to the ground.”

To this argument against the resurrection of *Jesus*, as reported by his historians, various answers might be instituted; but I shall confine myself to one only, which appears to my mind incapable of confutation upon any principles of philosophy or experience; and will indeed admit of no dispute, but upon positions, subversive of all historical testimony whatsoever, and introductory of universal scepticism.

The numerous circumstances, interspersed through the *Gospel narratives* and in the *Acts* of the

the *Apostles*, appertaining to the geography of countries, the positions of rivers, towns, and cities, public transactions of much notoriety and account in those days; the dress, customs, manners, languages, of nations and individuals; political characters of eminence, and their conduct, in connexion with a most potent and enlightened empire, with a vast multiplicity of detached occurrences and facts, not necessary to be specified at large; all these circumstances, I say, probable in themselves, and of fidelity unimpeached, challenge (to speak with moderation) as large a portion of credibility to these books, considered in the simple character of *historical* testimonials, as can be claimed for any writings whatever, received as genuine, and equally ancient and multifarious. Now no mean presumption arises in favour of the most *extraordinary* transactions also, blended in the same texture of narrative, by historians of so credible a character with respect to the rest of their relations; but, when those *extraordinary facts* are found to have so intimate an incorporation with the *common* and unsuspecting occurrences of these histories, as to admit of no detachment, but to stand or fall with the main body of the compositions, so that one part depends on another for consistency and support; I cannot see how any historical probability of the authenticity of these *extraordinary* events can rise higher than

in such an instance. But it will be proper to unfold the purport of this reasoning, which admits abundant illustration, more explicitly, by a particular example.

The apostles, *Peter* and *John*, after the death of their Master, in consequence of public and explicit actions in the city, are summoned before the priests and elders of the *Jews* *; in whose presence they boldly assert, that “ God had raised *Jesus* “ *Christ* of *Nazareth*, whom the *Jews* had crucified, from the dead.” After some examination and debate, the two *apostles* are commanded by those magistrates and rulers of the *Jewish* nation to teach no more in the name of *Jesus*. But these intrepid followers of Truth replied in precisely the words of *Socrates* to the *Athenians* †: “ We “ ought to obey God rather than men: for we “ cannot but speak the things which we have “ SEEN and HEARD.” Now this singular declaration stands interwoven with a variety of common and notorious particulars, neither incredible in themselves, nor of a complexion to excite suspicion in the mind of any reader. The things are probable, and the relation artless. But the whole series of the history becomes at once a

* Acts iv. 7. v. 27.

† In Apol. Platonis, p. 364. ed. Ludg. Acts v. 29.---iv. 20.

most romantic and absurd detail of madness and delusion, unequalled in the annals of rash fanaticism, if you suppose this one assertion of the death and resurrection of *Christ* to be a fallacy. For let us observe, what was the prospect and expectation of our *apostles* from this determination (which certainly is untinctured with temerity and folly) to perseverance. Nothing less than ridicule*, contempt, persecution, poverty, bodily chastisements, imprisonment, and death:—

“ Starving their gains, and martyrdom their price.”

Now, if we recollect in union with all this, what indeed should never be forgotten, and constitutes the main circumstance in the preceding argument, but must be brought forward to distinct inspection here, that these first teachers of *christianity*, the *companions, relations, and friends* of *Jesus*, did not endure these accumulated inconveniencies, of such serious impression to mortal sufferance, from a mere obstinate attachment to *speculative* opinions, in which, according to my own opinion, they were fallible as other men; but for asserting

* Which is justly ranked, by the writer to the *Hebrews*, among the very severest proofs of fortitude and integrity, chap. xi. verse 36. “ And others had trial of *mockings* and *scourgings*; yea, “ moreover, of bonds and imprisonment.”

the palpable unquestionable evidence of their *external senses*, nor less nor other, than what “ they had *heard*, and *seen*, and *handled**: no alternative of delusion or fallacy can be supposed; but their case stands clearly distinguished, not only from that of wild enthusiasts, but from that of every *future* victim to religious persuasions: liable, as these *apostles* were, to no misconstruction, no precipitate and prejudiced judgements, (which originally lay in a different direction) no conceivable imposture. The fallhood, therefore, of *Christ's* resurrection, in connection with this single fact of a public declaration before a *Jewish* council, and all the train of collateral circumstances dependant from it, as detailed at large in the memoirs of the *Gospel*, would, I am persuaded, upon any mathematical calculation of the sum of moral and historical presumption, amount to an improbability of the greatest magnitude; an improbability of no similar example in the annals of human nature, indefinitely approximating to a *miraculous event*. “ In summ; (I quote the words of *Dr. Clarke* in his *evidences*, p. 444. edit. 9.) “ there is no matter of fact in the world attested in “ history, with so many circumstances, with so “ many collateral evidences, and in every respect

* 1 John, i. 1. See also Remark xli. in my *Evidences of Christianity*.

“ attended

“ attended with so many marks of truth, as this
 “ concerning the doctrine and works of Christ.”

Our *deist* proceeds thus :

“ The resurrection and ascension, supposing
 “ them to have taken place, admitted of public
 “ and ocular demonstration, like that of the as-
 “ cension of a balloon, or the sun at noon day,
 “ to all Jerusalem at least. A thing which every
 “ body is required to believe, requires that the
 “ proof and evidence of it should be equal to
 “ all, and universal ; and as the public visibility
 “ of this last related act was the only evidence
 “ that could give sanction to the former part, the
 “ whole of it falls to the ground, because that
 “ evidence never was given. Instead of this, a
 “ small number of persons, not more than eight
 “ or nine, are introduced as proxies for the
 “ whole world, to say, they *saw it*, and all the
 “ rest of the world are called upon to believe it.
 “ But it appears that Thomas did not believe the
 “ resurrection ; and, as they say, would not be-
 “ lieve, without having ocular and manual de-
 “ monstration himself. *So neither will I* ; and the
 “ reason is equally good for me and for every
 “ other person, as for Thomas.”

But the demonstration of the *resurrection* may,
 beyond all controversy, have been sufficiently
 public to demand our assent, in conjunction with
 such

such a variety of corroborating coincidences* already specified, though it were not attested by the ocular observation of all *Jerusalem*; which *Mr. Paine*, with most unconscionable requisition, supposes absolutely necessary to the establishment of this fact†. The actual degree of publicity, however, attendant on this transaction, according to the histories themselves, may be learned from the texts referred to below‡; and is ignorantly stated by our author. Not a thousandth part of the people in *Great Britain* saw *Lunardi* go up from the *Artillery Ground* in a *balloon*; but the superior impulse to any possible action upon my mind, who saw him, in consequence of that event, does not exceed an impulse to a similar action on the mind of another, who did *not* see him, in the midst of such notoriety and general corroboration, by an *evanescent infinitesimal* of efficacy. The circumstance itself is received in the world, with perfect acquiescence at this moment, by all, who turn their observation to it; and its acceptation to the present age will render it completely credible to the remotest generations, without a long detail

* See *Jeremy Taylor*, part iii. p. 123.

† The reader may see further remarks on this subject in *Larw's Considerations*, p. 149. note E.

‡ *Matthew*, xxviii. 9. *Luke*, xxiv. 13. *John*, xx. 19, 26.

1 *Corinthians*, xv. 5—9.

of specific evidence; and much less without actual inspection. No lapse of time will destroy a credibility, so founded and established, with reasonable men, unless some essential disparity between the constitutional humanity of those days and the present can be pointed out. The man, therefore, who is resolved to believe no transaction, but upon "ocular and manual demonstration," is compelled to bely his own theory in every movement of his life. This argument I hold to be universally satisfactory, and intelligible to the most untutored capacity, not constitutionally defective.

I might advance also, in aid of these remarks, that mankind are most evidently placed here in a state of *probationary imperfection*: that, instead of *certainty* for our guide, we are compelled to trust, on most occasions, to degrees of *probability* infinitely diversified: and that some of our noblest and most refined excellencies, moral and intellectual, spring from a forbearance and candour, from a diffidence and docility and lowliness of understanding, which *disputable evidence* is best calculated to generate and foster. Besides, that exercise and agitation of our mental powers, which is inevitably produced by the delays and difficulties, intervening propositions of this nature and the attainment of moral certainty, in a painful

F

disquisition

disquisition of evidence, and a long deduction of particulars, contribute essentially to the quickness, the clearness, the vigour, and general salubrity of our understandings; just as the water of a river is meliorated and refined by a winding obstructed passage over sand and gravel *. It might as well be pretended, that the faculties of man would be enlarged, and his condition improved, without the necessity of labour and ingenuity for the subsistence and well-being of common life: if the trees dropt honey into our mouths, if the land flowed with milk and nectar; as is fabled of the golden age†. The emphatical declaration,

* ——— fontes liquidi, atque exercita cursu
Flumina. Virg. Geo. iii. 529.

† Flumina jam lactis, jam flumina nectaris, ibant;
Flavaque de viridi stillabant ilice mella.
Ovid, metam. i. iii.

There is not more delightful poetry, than true philosophy, in those lines of *Virgil*, Geo. i. 121.

pater ipse colendi
Haud facilem esse viam voluit; primusque per artem
Movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda,
Nec torpere gravi passus sua regna veterno.
The fire of Gods and men, with hard decrees,
Forbids our plenty to be bought with ease;
And wills that mortal men inur'd to toil,
Should exercise, with pains, the grudging soil.
Himself invented first the shining share,
And whetted human industry by care:
Himself did handy-craft and arts ordain:
Nor suffer'd sloth to rust his active reign.

DRYDEN.

therefore,

therefore, of *Christ*, which has been a subject of so much debate and dissertation, is no fanatical ejaculation of a wild enthusiast, but a position strictly philosophical and intrinsically wise: "Thou-
 " mas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast be-
 " lieved; blessed are they, that have *not seen*, and
 " yet have believed*."

No considerate and inquisitive christian will by any means pretend, that he sees the truth of his master's resurrection, and the system supported by it, with the same intuition, which perceives the equality of the *three angles* of a triangle to *two right angles* †. He is satisfied with thinking an acquiescence in this grand doctrine, not only strictly rational and philosophical, but absolutely compulsory, as much so as in a case of *certainty*, if the evidences outweigh the objections; if he descry it's indissoluble connection with other numerous occurrences of the highest probability; if it form a most important link in one concatenated series

* John, xx. 29. See some excellent reasoning on this subject in *Bishop Law's* "reflections on the life and character of *Christ*," pp. 290, 291, 333. To the same purpose is that common declaration of our Lord, and grounded on the same principles of truth and soberness: "Who so hath ears to hear, let him hear."

† "Such *moral* evidence, or mixt proofs from circumstances and testimony, as most matters of fact are only capable of, and wise and honest men are always satisfied with, ought to be accounted sufficient in the present case." *Clarke's evidences*: p. 158.

of divine communications, dignified and important in themselves, corroborated by contemporary histories, and ascertained almost to demonstration by the preceding and present circumstances of mankind at large : if, in short, nothing can be discovered in such a system, unfit for man to receive, or the Creator to bestow ; but, on the contrary, innumerable indications present themselves of that benevolence to the human race, which is to us the most convincing characteristic of the Divinity*.

“ It is in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise
 “ this matter. The story, so far as relates to the
 “ supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and
 “ imposition stamped upon the face of it. Who
 “ were the authors of it is as impossible for us to
 “ know, as it is for us to be assured, that the books
 “ in which the account is related, were written by
 “ the persons whose names they bear. The best
 “ surviving evidence we now have respecting this
 “ affair is the Jews. They are regularly descend-
 “ ed from the people who lived in the times this
 “ resurrection and ascension is said to have hap-
 “ pened, and they say, *it is not true*. It has long

* “ The religion of the gospel can rest on nothing more than
 “ probability : yet may that probability be such, as will, and ought
 “ to force our assent.” *Bolingbroke, essay 4.*

“ appeared

“ appeared to me a strange inconsistency to cite
 “ the Jews as a proof of the truth of the story.
 “ It is just the same as if a man were to say, I
 “ will prove the truth of what I have told you,
 “ by producing the people who say it is false.”

That the story of the resurrection “ has every
 “ mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the
 “ face of it,” is the hardy assertion of one, who
 must be deemed to have nothing better to offer
 than *hardy assertion*, ’till he present us with a de-
 duction of particulars in vindication of his confi-
 dence: and, if the books should *not* be written in
 reality by those identical persons, whose names are
 affixed, (which is no *essential* circumstance) the
 truth of the facts themselves is deducible from a
 mass of collateral and independent evidence.
 And with respect to the incredulity of the *Jews*,
 many satisfactory reasons may be alledged for
 the solution of this slight objection. I have
 been assured indeed, and upon authority exceed-
 ingly respectable, that in the written annals of the
Israelitish nation, repositied at *Venice* and *Amster-*
dam, two miracles of *Jesus* stand recorded; one
 of which is the resuscitation of the widow’s son
 at *Nain**: but I would not wish this argument to

* Luke vii. ii. “ Many of the *miracles*, that *Jesus* worked in
 “ his life-time, are, as to matters of fact, (particularly his heal-
 “ ing the lame and the blind, and casting out devils; i. e. healing
 “ men

pass for more than it's proper value. It is, however, acknowledged by the *Jews*, that such a person as *Jesus of Nazareth* existed*, and at the time assigned by the *Evangelists*: but motives numerous and highly probable may be suggested for their rejection of him. The *Jewish* nation were expecting a magnificent leader and glorious conqueror in the person of their *Messiah*, not an obscure *Nazarene*, in the capacity of an humble teacher, dispensing lessons of humility and benevolence: they were at that time, as appears from their countryman *Josephus*, and from the concurrent voices of *Roman* and *Evangelical* historians, a people beyond measure headstrong, vicious, and depraved: their leading men, with their chief-priests and scribes, whose opinions and authority swayed the whole nation, according to the custom of corrupt communities, hated and reviled *Jesus*, not only for that simplicity and purity of life, which of itself read a lecture of tacit reprobation to their ostentatious and immoral characters, but much more for his public and unreserved reproof of their ignorance, their tyranny, their selfishness, their extortion, and hypocrisy. Now, if it should

“ men of disordered understandings) expressly owned by the most
 “ implacable enemies of Christianity, by *Celsus* and *Julian*, and
 “ the authors of the *Jewish Talmud*.” *Clarke's evidences*, p. 357

* See Bishop Lowth's note on *Isaiah*, liii. 21.

be rejoined to these allegations, (and nothing else discoverable by me can be rejoined) that *miracles*, if *Jesus* really performed them, would not have failed, however, to overpower their prejudices and counteract their animosity: I reply *first*; that the *Jews*, who admitted the possibility of working miracles by a confederacy with evil spirits, and a skill in magical operations*, would much more easily take refuge in that popular solution, than surrender their emoluments, their vices, and professional importance as religious rulers, entwined as these were with a large portion of intellectual depravity; than offer up such costly sacrifices to the name and authority of a detested Censor. And, *secondly*, daily experience presents us with innumerable instances of a perseverance in vicious practices, which the unhappy victims of this sensual tyranny are in their own minds fully assured, will as inevitably terminate in wretchedness and destruction, as if the evidence of so disastrous an issue were ascertained by a *miracle*. Such radical sottishness of heart and understanding, therefore, it is manifest, nothing would influence to truth and virtue; not even the resurrection of a dead body from the grave!

* This is manifest from *Josephus*, as well as various passages of the *New Testament*. See the note in Bishop Law's *Considerations* p. 138, where the subject is more expanded.

But

But the subject before us admits of further illustration, I think, from the example even of *Mr. Paine* himself. In this country, where his exposure of the corruptions of government has raised him so many adversaries, and such a swarm of unprincipled hirelings have settled upon him, exerting themselves to blacken his character and misrepresent all the transactions and incidents of his life; will it not be a most difficult, nay, an impossible task, for posterity, after a lapse of 1700 years, if such a wreck of modern literature, as that of the ancient, should intervene, to identify the real circumstances, moral and civil, of the man? And would a true historian of his life, such as the *Evangelists*, for example, in the case of *Jesus*, be credited at that future period against such a predominant incredulity, without large and weighty accessions of collateral attestation? And how transcendantly extraordinary, I had almost said *miraculous*, will it be esteemed, by candid and reasonable minds, that a writer, whose object was, a melioration of condition to the common people, and their deliverance from aristocratical oppression, from poverty and wretchedness, to the numberless blessings of upright and equal government, should be reviled, persecuted, and burned in effigy, with every circumstance of insult and execration, by these very objects of his benevolent intentions, in every corner of the kingdom?

Alas!

Alas! this is the portion of all *reformers*, in their successive generations; calumny, persecution, and even death itself awaits them: from *Moses*, through *Socrates* and *Christ*, to *Thomas Paine*.

Upon the whole, we find no difficulty in declaring, that what has astonished *Mr. Paine* so long, should astonish him, as a reasonable man, no longer. What species of argumentation is more common, and of more legitimate character, than that which maintains the probable truth of a circumstance from the evidence of corrupt and interested witnesses, who assert it to be false? The very denial of our Lord's pretensions in such a vicious and self-sufficient people as the *Jews*, their rejection of his doctrines, and their obduracy to his expostulations with them on their national depravity and impending ruin, form together no mean presumption in favour of the character of *Jesus*. Indeed *Mr. Paine* pleads our cause with so much ability against himself, that I should be unpardonable in withholding the next paragraph, replete with cogency and good sense, from the notice of the reader.

“ That such a person as *Jesus Christ* existed,
 “ that he was crucified, which was the mode of
 “ execution at that day, are historical relations
 “ strictly within the limits of probability. He
 G “ preached

“ preached most excellent morality, and the equality of man ; but he preached also against the
 “ corruptions and avarice of the Jewish priests ;
 “ and this brought upon him the hatred and
 “ vengeance of the whole order of the priest-
 “ hood.”

In the following pages, from p. 13 to p. 21, *Mr. Paine* enters into what he calls “ a bold investigation, and which, he apprehends, will alarm many.” Upon this sublime topic of discussion our author fancies himself, no doubt, extremely eloquent ; and, instead of plain sensible *Thomas Paine*, he commences a tumid and hypertragical declaimer. We may conceive him to have invoked his muse in the high tone of *Epic* poesy :

Nunc, veneranda Pales ! magno nunc ore sonandum.

A most formidable and pompous representation indeed is exhibited of the *Devil* ; with a detail of the battles, the transformations, the imprisonment, and other strange adventures of that incomparable *knight-errant*, that flower of all *chivalry*, his *Satanic* majesty. These redoubtable allegations, I grant, may swell into a serious difficulty with good *churchmen* and puritanical devotees ; but to myself, and others of the same *orthodox* standard, occasion no embarrassment at all ; being
 received

received with exactly the degree of credit, vouchsafed to these marvellous exploits by *Thomas Paine* himself. The whole fable of the *Devil* and his angels, with all it's terrific appendages, has been gratuitously fabricated by the fertile fancy of superstition from one or two emblematical passages in the *Revelations*, where the author has delineated future characters and events under the guise of these fictitious personages. No received rules of interpretation, and no circumstances of the *Jewish* or *Christian* systems, make it necessary for us to regard the *Devil*, or *Satan*, in any other light than that of a *character* merely *allegorical*. This mode of *personification* was perfectly suited to the taste of the *orientals*; who delighted in speaking, not only with the embellishments of striking metaphor, but by *actions* also: and their compositions are, in many instances, a tissue of figurative and emblematical expression. The origin of evil, moral and natural, is a problem, which has exercised the ingenuity of man, since the creation of the world; and the *Hebrews* relieved the distress of mind, resulting from these disquisitions, by personifying an *evil principle* under the denomination of *Satan*, or the *enemy*. The *Greeks* also had recourse to a similar contrivance for their satisfaction on this point; and employed *Atè*, the *Furies*, and other malignant deities, as convenient substitutes

tutes for *the origin of evil* *. Nor were similar fictions, with a view to the same embarrassment, unknown to the followers of *Confucius* and *Zoroaster*, to the *Persians* and *Egyptians*, to the aboriginal *Indians* of *America*, to the divines of *Peru* and *Mexico*. But *Mr. Paine's* information upon the subject of modern theology must be very slender indeed, or he would have known, that those, who have distinguished themselves of late years in the freedom of scriptural research, unfettered by the chicanery and bribery of *establishments*, have exploded these monstrous doctrines; doctrines, which receive no real countenance from the genius of the *Christian* covenant, or the sense of scripture; and will soon have no existence, but in the creeds of *Dames* and *Nurses*, and the musty repositories of *old-wives'* fables, for infantile discipline or amusement. Alas! our *Deist* fancied himself, sword in hand, in stout combat with genuine *Christianity*, whilst he was buffeting a mere phantom of ignorance and superstition with a bulrush! So easy is successful declamation against folly!

“ These books, beginning with *Genesis* and
“ ending with *Revelations* (which by the bye is a

* See *Homer's Iliad*, xix. 87—91.

“book of riddles that requires a Revelation to
“explain it) are, we are told, the word of God.”

The vindicator, who occupies himself in the confutation of such unsupported and dogmatical assertions, is not much more excusable, than the *ignoramus*, who has the audacity to produce them. I thus express myself with unreserved censure, upon a probability of the highest kind, that *Mr. Paine* never studied the *apocalypse* with an express view of deciding upon the authenticity of that singular composition. When he has done this, and is able to invalidate merely those incontrovertible *internal* symptoms of genuineness, which the synchronisms, the curious coincidences and arrangement of the parts, detected and elucidated with such incomparable skill and clearness in the sagacious analysis of *Joseph Mede*, must carry with them to the mind of every dispassionate examiner, it will then, and not sooner, become proper and seasonable to discuss the allegations of our deist against this volume. But that the random fiction of a distempered brain should be marked with such characters of consistency and truth, as are found on the face of the *apocalypse*, is to me perfectly inconceivable: nor much unlike a suspicion, that the fabric of *St. Peter's* at *Rome* was not the work of architectural ingenuity, but thrown up
in

in it's present form by an earthquake or a volcano.

“ When the church mythologists established
 “ their system, they collected all the writings they
 “ could find, and managed them as they pleased.
 “ It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us
 “, whether such of the writings as now appear,
 “ under the name of the Old and New Testa-
 “ ment, are in the same state in which those col-
 “ lectors say they found them; or whether they
 “ added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.

“ Be this as it may, they decided by *vote* which
 “ of the books out of the collection they had
 “ made, should be the WORD OF GOD, and which
 “ should not. They rejected several; they voted
 “ others to be doubtful, such as the books called
 “ the Apocrypha; and those books which had a
 “ majority of votes, were voted to be the word of
 “ God. Had they voted otherwise, all the people,
 “ since calling themselves Christians, had believed
 “ otherwise; for the belief of the one comes
 “ from the vote of the other. Who the people
 “ were that did all this, we know nothing of;
 “ they called themselves by the general name
 “ of the church; and this is all we know of the
 “ matter.”

In

In answer to this undigested and inaccurate statement of the case, I observe, as follows : It is most certain, and ought not to be dissembled, that *all* the books of the *Old* and *New Testament* have not come confirmed to us by the same degree of historical evidence. They may be commodiously and properly distributed into two classes ; Books of *Fact*, and Books of *Opinion*. Under the former class, I would comprise from *Genesis* to the book of *Job*, with the *Gospels* and *Acts* of the *Apostles* ; and under the latter, to make the largest concession to this argument, the *Hagiographa* and *Prophets*, i. e. all the remainder of the *Old Testament*, with the *Epistles* and *Apocalypse* of the *New*. Now, that we may wave, on the present occasion, all extraneous discussion of the evidences and importance of the latter collection, the *Christian* and *Jewish* systems need no support beyond the authenticity of the *historic* class : and I assert in the fullest confidence, and appeal to a multitude of publications in behalf of this assertion, that no history whatever, taking its antiquity into consideration, has more claims to be received as genuine, than the histories in question. And what need of circumstantial detail on such a worn-out argument, in repelling the objections of men, who really know just nothing of the subject ; who satisfy their *reason* and *philosophy* forsooth ! by peremptory

tory asseveration only, in all the plenitude of dictatorial self-sufficiency, unilluminated by one single ray of information on the topic in dispute*? To contravene positions, that have been discussed again and again by writers of the first genius and erudition, and to disparage the genuineness of the *bible histories* wholly and indiscriminately, without some precision and investigation, some specific allegations founded on the report of authentic documents, Candour herself must deem intolerable arrogance, and the consummation of literary profligacy. With respect to the *internal* evidences of these *histories**, I am persuaded, and would engage to prove in detail, that they are exceedingly superior to those of any ancient records whatever, whose authenticity is admitted; evidences, of which no man will doubt, who does not unreasonably insist on *mathematical demonstration* in cases only susceptible of varying *probabilities*. However this be, it is my settled persuasion, deduced from experience and the manners of mankind, that, if no *written memorials* of the *Jewish* and *Christian* dispensations were at this moment in

* I have long had in contemplation a work relative to the authenticity of the *Old Testament*, similar to my *Evidences of Christianity*; which I hope some day to execute. This might apologize for my brevity now, if such hasty and crude objections could lay claim to any apology at all.

existence,

existence, the present condition of the professors of these systems, as a traduction of believers in certain principles, composing vast aggregates of men through an uninterrupted succession of ages; of men, in a variety of instances persecuted, distressed, and destroyed for their belief; this existing fact, I say, cannot be accounted for, but on a supposition of the original reasonableness of these dispensations, in the apprehensions of the *first* professors; and consequently of their probable authenticity: unless indeed we are resolved to exempt the men of that æra from the common benefits of rationality, and a participation of human feelings. It were most easy to enlarge on this subject; but more has been said already, than such desultory and unsubstantial objections have any reason to expect: and I shall but add, from a multiplicity of cogent instances, with reference to one branch of evidence of the first moment, that a comparison of the xxviii. chapter of *Deuteronomy* only, with the subsequent and present state of the *Israelitish* nation, must flash conviction, I should think, upon any mind, not totally clouded by a palpable darkness of prejudice and perversity, in favour of the *prophetical* pretensions of the *Scriptures*: for, that the book of *Deuteronomy* was composed *posterior* to these events, what effrontery

even

even of unlearned *deism*, if it hazard the assertion, will undertake to prove *?

“ Revelation is a communication of something,
 “ which the person, to whom that thing is revealed,
 “ did not know before. For if I have done a
 “ thing, or seen it done, it needs no revelation to
 “ tell me I have done it, or seen it, nor to enable
 “ me to tell it, or to write it.”

This is not only the *essence*, but the *quintessence*, of all weakness and absurdity: and affords a melancholy instance, how men of real genius and abilities must expose themselves, when they venture to discuss subjects of the highest moment, for which they are qualified neither by reading nor reflection. Such presumption is no other than the case, simply but pointedly described by the apostle: “ Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools†.”

* Most remarkable too with respect to this people is that prediction of *Jeremiah*, xxx. 11. “ For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee.” There is nothing similar in the history of our species to the continuance of the *Jerus* as a distinct and unmixed body, in so many nations, through such a succession of ages, and in the midst of perpetual persecution.

— genus immortale manet, multosque per annos
 Stat fortuna domus, et avi numerantur avorum.

† *Romans*, i. 22.

Mr.

Mr. Paine has given us a notable definition truly; where the term to be explained constitutes a part ! which is just the same, as if a *geometer* should define an angle to be " the meeting of two lines " together in an *angular* direction. But, to pass by this stupidity ; How sayest thou, Child of reason ? " Revelation is a communication of something not known before." So then, not only the professors of philosophy at the higher places of education, but every dame, that teaches the *horn-book* in a country village, communicates, it seems, a *revelation* to her bantling ! And the man, who so defines and so conceives, and, upon the strength of such definition and conception, talks about it, and about it with all the fulness and authority of self-sufficient knowledge, is able, it should seem, to demolish *Judaism* and *Christianity** with a few dashes of his pen, and to establish his own deism on their ruins !

" How would our fathers rise up in a rage,
" And swear all shame is lost in *George's* age !"

What our redoubtable antagonist immediately subjoins, favours of equal imbecillity, and of total misapprehension of the subject under contempla-

* Quos neque Tydides, nec Larissæus Achilles,
Non anni domuere decem, non mille carinæ.

VIRG.

H 2

tion.

tion. The greater part of the *bible-history* contains simply a narrative of the *political* occurrences of the *Jews*; and the transactions recorded are, therefore, in a variety of instances to be considered in the same light with those of all other *civil* histories; namely, as aggravated, confused, distorted, and disguised in a thousand instances by passing through the medium of national partiality. The history of *Sampson* is, on this account, to be credited in proportion only to that degree of probability, measured by the common experience of mankind and the state of the world in those days, which the history itself, discarding all idea of supernatural interference, shall claim in the estimation of reasonable judges, under such qualifications and deductions, as will by no means invalidate the main body and the leading facts of the narrative, contemplated as a national register of distinguished persons and remarkable events.

I agree with *Thomas Paine*, that “ the account
 “ of the creation, with which the book of *Genesis*
 “ opens, has all the appearance of being a tradi-
 “ tion, which the *Israelites* had among them be-
 “ fore they came into *Egypt*; and after their de-
 “ parture from that country, they put it at the
 “ head of their history, without telling, as is
 “ most probable that they did not know, how they
 “ came by it.”

But

But what majesty of sentiment, what a dignified simplicity of expression, what a comprehensive brevity, characterises the *Mosaic* account of the creation of the world! Compare only this elegant and compendious relation with the strange, confused, and despicable *cosmogonies* of the *Greeks*: for it is manifest from internal evidence, that *Ovid's* beautiful description, though debased with some puerility of expression, was constructed upon the *Mosaic* narrative: nor, otherwise, is it probable, that the literary *Romans* of the *Augustan* age should be strangers to the *Greek* translation of the *Old Testament* *.

To all that occurs between pages 23 and 31, as far as they comprehend any objections to the *Jewish* institution, a very satisfactory answer has, if I mistake not, been already given. One predominant error in page 44, it may not be unreasonable to detect. *Mr. Paine* there asserts:

“ Why it has been called the *Mosaic* account
 “ of the creation, I am at a loss to conceive.
 “ *Moses*, I believe, was too good a judge of such

* *Fuscus Aristius*, to whom *Horace* addresses the 22d Ode of the first Book, and his tenth Epistle, one of the most intimate and beloved friends of the Poet, was either a native *Jew*, or a *proselyte*; compare Sat. i. 9. 60,—72.

“ subjects

“ subjects to put his name to that account. He
 “ had been educated among the Egyptians, who
 “ were a people as well skilled in science, and
 “ particularly in astronomy, as any people of
 “ their day.”

All this may be literally true; but a palpable *untruth* is implied in it: that the *Ægyptians* were really a learned and scientific people: whereas their science and their astronomy was just nothing at all. If not, produce me your vouchers to this fact, from existing monuments or ancient testimony*. Political society was undoubtedly existing in much stability and order, comparatively speaking, at a very early period in *Ægypt*; but probably not earlier than in *China* and *Indostan*, or, perhaps, other pleasant and fertile countries of the *East*: but where shall we find the scientific discoveries of all, or any of these people, at the *Mosaic æra*? The sole authentic circumstance, which has fallen to my knowledge, as favourable

* See a posthumous dissertation by *Dr. Woodward* in the *Archæologia* of the Society of Antiquaries, vol. iv. dissert. 19. and the notes in *Bishop Laro's* Considerations, pp. 30. 227. *Lord Monboddo* harps much upon this string, and is abundantly out of tune in this respect; but he refuses to be taught, and must be left to the enjoyment of his error. He seems to be of the man's mind in *Horace*:

Praetulerim scriptor delirus inersque videri,
 Dum mea delectant mala me, vel denique fallant,
 Quam sapere et ringi.

to this opinion concerning the science of the *Ægyptians*, but in much later ages, is that eagerness, with which the *Grecian* sages travelled for information to this country. But, without much expectation of scientific fruits, these inquisitive minds would be very desirous of visiting a country so long civilized, renowned for such magnificent edifices, and watered by a river, which had long been the theme of poets and challenged universal admiration among mankind from it's annual inundations, then deemed peculiar to itself; and the *Ægyptian* priests, like priests of other ages, cajoled mankind with juggling tricks, mysterious mythologies, lying legends of gods and heroes, and an imaginary chronology dependant on pretended observations of *eclipses* from a very early period. But, I apprehend, the acquisitions of these *Greeks* from their peregrination into *Ægypt* were no more than the general acquisitions of modern travellers, and those of *Ulysses* in ancient times; who, as we learn from *Pope's* translation of the *Odyssey*,

“ Wandering from clime to clime, observant stray'd,
 “ Their manners noted, and their states survey'd.”

The few elementary propositions in *geometry*, which are ascribed to *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, ought not to be imputed, in all probability, to any communication

munications from the *Ægyptians*; but were the pure inventions of these most acute and god-like philosophers. Yes; such men, as *Plato* and *Pythagoras*, would either have learned more, or have learned nothing from the *Ægyptians*: and who can doubt, but they would have been ingenuous enough to acknowledge their obligations of this kind to their preceptors: but I know not of any such acknowledgments on record. Not a day passes, however, but authors, copying authors, are trumpeting the *science* of the *Ægyptians* without proof, upon all occasions; a science, which has no existence but in the misconceptions of their own brain, and the creeds of their teachers. And these *deists* after all laugh at *Christians*, forsooth! for their credulity.

Mr. *Paine* has condescended to inform us through several pages, in a dissertation of much pomp and solemnity, that the proper meaning of the *Hebrew* word *prophet* is a *poet*. His account is not accurate. The primary sense of *prophet* is a *teacher*: but, as the early institutors of all nations delivered their precepts in *poetry*, hence arose the *secondary* meaning in question, that of *poet*. Hence *Epimenides*, the *Cretan poet*, is stiled a *prophet* by *St. Paul* himself, *Tit. i. 12.* and *Homer* is called by *Antipater of Sidon*, the *prophet of the Gods*; as if versifying from *cœlestial inspiration*.

piration. But what is all this to the purpose, unless *Mr. Paine* can prove it impossible for *poetry* to be something properly *predictive*, because it is not always so? Never did man argue more inconclusively, or with less precision, than our author in this instance.

“ If we permit ourselves to conceive right
 “ ideas of things, we must necessarily affix the
 “ idea, not only of unchangeableness, but of the
 “ utter impossibility of any change taking place,
 “ by any means or accident whatever, in that
 “ which we would honour with the name of the
 “ word of God; and therefore the word of
 “ God cannot exist in any written or human lan-
 “ guage.”

What can be more frivolous than this also, and more unworthy of a man of sense? Let us give a statement of the case. A revelation, we suppose, is first conveyed to a particular person; he proposes the communication, with the proofs of his mission, to the consideration of others; they transmit the same in their turn by a general oral tradition, and written records, to their posterity. It is readily acknowledged, that no succeeding evidence to future generations can either generate

or strictly authorise, that most indubitable conviction of the first immediate possessor; but even *their* evidence may approximate to certainty beyond any assignable limits, so as to amount to a species of persuasion, from a multifarious concurrence of corroborating particulars, which is morally irresistible*. Who, even at this day, can be assured, that *Michael Angelo* planned the fabric of *St. Peter's* at *Rome*, or *Sir Christopher Wren*, *St. Paul's* in *London*, with a satisfaction equal to that of the contemporaries of these transactions? And yet, what man in his senses, who has examined the documents of these established opinions, entertains the least doubt of these respective facts? And so it *may be* with respect to the *Jewish* and *Christian* revelations; and so it *is*, any arguments of *Mr. Paine* to the contrary notwithstanding. A few mistakes of copyists and printers make no more alteration in the *general* effect of this argument, than a new stone, or pinnacle repaired, will be deemed to abolish the pretensions of the primary architect to his structure. It is a maxim, not more generally admitted in poetry, than in reasonings on the subject of revelation:

* This point I have urged already, in a former part of this reply, as the reader will recollect; so that repetition may be spared now.

Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit :

Never presume to make a god appear,
But for a business worthy of a god.

But *Mr. Paine* truly would require a *Cherub*, be-
striding a cloud and perching on the table, to su-
perintend the pen of every scriptural scribe, to di-
rect his hand with unfailing accuracy in points
and commas ! as nine-tenths of the *Christian*
world, I can assure him, are fully persuaded, that
a much more awful personage,

O'er-laid with black, staid Wisdom's hue,

no less a coadjutor than the DEVIL himself, was
seated at *his* elbow, and prompted *his* invention,
when he indited the *Age of Reason*, the goodly
subject of our present examination :

———— sed non ego credulus illis.

“ I now go on to the book called the New
“ Testament. The *new* Testament ! that is, the
“ *new* Will, as if there could be two wills of the
“ Creator.”

Scarcely a single *Christian* can be found, I be-
lieve, so totally ignorant and untutored, as not to
know, that the *New Covenant* is the proper title of
this book. Most completely ridiculous then does

Mr. Paine make himself by his serious contest with vulgar and exploded errors. A plain demonstration this, how little of what is new and important *he* has to bring forward on these long agitated disquisitions.

From p. 33 to 36, not an *iota* of remark is to be discovered, that does not disgrace the meanest understanding; and no objection, that a school-boy could not confute. My countrymen must be degenerated into a *swinish multitude* indeed, to find any nutriment in such a mess of pigs-meat, as these wretched caterers *David Andrews* and *Thomas Paine* have provided for them. But what better can be expected from *zeal* without *knowledge*? Nothing indeed, but dogmatism, misrepresentation, nonsense, and obscurity. In short, to employ our author's own words in page 38. "I become so tired with examining into the inconsistencies and absurdities of *Thomas Paine's* effusion, that I hasten to the conclusion of it, in order to proceed," but on very unpromising speculation of success, "to something better."

It is most true, as our author asserts in p. 40, that "The church has set up a system of religion very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears. It has set up a religion

“ gion of pomp and of revenue in pretended
 “ imitation of a person whose life was humility
 “ and poverty :” yet, according to the stale but
 just maxim, whose dictates *Mr. Paine* has so incessantly and egregiously violated in this crude production ; “ *ab abusu ad usum non valet consequentia* :” these *corruptions* are not chargeable on the spirit of *true christianity* : the argument will not infer from *perverted revelation* to *no revelation* at all. No : there are, we trust, such things in being, as *truth, philosophy, and revealed religion*, in spite of *lying chroniclers, imaginary system-mongers, and meretricious theologians*.

Your notion of *redemption*, upon which you so largely expatiate and so tragically declaim, in the following pages, is the notion derived probably from your *quaker* father, and the good fraternity, among whom you received your education ; but is not the notion of the scriptures. Our doctrine is, that God created man pure and upright, with a capacity of conforming himself in all respects to the injunctions of the divine will * : that life without cessation was the proposed reward of unfailing obedience ; and death, the punishment of

* So *Solomon* : “ Lo ! this only have I found ; that God hath
 “ made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.”
Ecclesiastes, vii. 29.

transgression,

transgression. Man deviated from the line of rectitude by listening to the seductions of wayward appetite*; and he became justly exposed to the penalty denounced against sin. His heavenly Father, who in the midst of judgement remembers mercy, and delights, through the whole conduct of his providential administrations to mankind, in educating good from evil; renews his covenant with his erring creatures; promises to reverse this sentence of death, and to re-establish him in his claim to immortality by means of another dispensation at some future season, (stiled in scripture, for reasons demonstrably valid, *the fulness of time*) which appeared to divine wisdom the best calculated for it's promulgation to the world. Accordingly, after a preparatory system, whose chief object was the establishment of a belief in one God, in opposition to the corruptions of idol-worship, by the separation of a peculiar people from the mass of mankind; *Jesus of Nazareth* was commissioned to preach in *Judea* the terms of acceptance with the Almighty. These were, a belief and practice of those doctrines, which this apostle preached, and confirmed by miracles: the doctrines of unbounded mercy on the part of God upon repen-

* This was a traditionary doctrine of the *Bramins* also, as appears from the conversation of *Calanus* with *Alexander*, related by *Strabo*, lib. xv. p. 1042. ed. Amst.

tance and reformation, and of universal undistinguishing benevolence on the part of man to all his brethren of the human race : principles, essential in themselves to the virtue and happiness of mankind ; and therefore required, as immutable conditions of divine favour, by this system of revelation. Thus was the inestimable privilege of immortality again indulged to the world ; and *Jesus* himself propounded as the *voucher* of this grand truth. Hence manifestly appears the reason, why, he did not “ die of a fever, or of the “ small-pox, of old age*,” or in any private customary manner ; but by a public exhibition of death, before the natives of all civilized countries under heaven, upon a cross : that he, whose resurrection had been previously appointed by himself for the test and demonstration of the whole *christian system*, as it related to the destruction of death and the gift of immortality, might be shown to the world unequivocally and indubitably *dead*†. This may be regarded as a brief abstract of the *evangelical* scheme of redemption according to my conception of it ; a scheme, which admits of

* Page 36, of *Mr. Paine's* pamphlet.

† See Remark, xliii. in my *Evidences of Christianity*. Had *Jesus* died in any of the ways pointed out by the wisdom of *Mr. Paine*, we should have been called upon to clear the suspicions of collusion and imposture from the privacy of that event.

abundant illustration and establishment from a multiplicity of considerations, conformable alike to reason, philosophy, and experience ; but neither does the present occasion permit, nor the weight of *Mr. Paine's* objections require, a more copious display, or a more scrupulous corroboration of our creed. His breath may wave, perhaps, a leaf on the cedar of *Lebanon*, but the root, and even the branches, are unmoved by his feeble efforts. That tree defies alike the winds and rains; the ravages of the atmosphere, and the tooth of time :

quæ quantum vertice ad auras
 Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.
 Ergò non hyemes illam, non flabra, neque imbres
 Convellunt ; immota manet, multosque per annos
 Multa virûm volvens durando sæcula vincit :
 Tum, fortes latè ramos et brachia tendens
 Hùc illùc, media ipsa ingentem sustinet umbram.

In page 46, you say, " Jesus Christ could speak " but one language, which was Hebrew," with as much confidence, as if you had been personally acquainted with him. Now the vernacular language of the *Jews* was not *bible Hebrew*, but a *Syro-Chaldaic* dialect of that language, thus mixed and degenerated during the *Babylonish* captivity, and subsequent communication with their neighbours; not without an adoption of numerous terms

terms from the *Greeks* and their *Roman* conquerors: and my opinion is, that the inhabitants of *Judea*, and the greater part of the *Roman* empire, understood *Greek* also, as well and generally, at least, as the *Irish* understand *English*: but what claim have those, who, in the true spirit of literary profligacy, decide without knowledge, in favour of their own wild theories, to any satisfaction on this point? My wish is to excite in the deistical lovers of truth a conscientious desire to examine for themselves; a sober estimate of their own acquirements; and a modest persuasion, that the disciples of *Christ* may have *some* reasons, not wholly puerile and inefficient, for their attachment to their religion: and I recommend, in the mean time, to the consideration of the *atheist* (if such men really exist, which I doubt exceedingly*) what *Mr. Paine* advances in the 48th and following pages and at the conclusion of his pamphlet. I know not whether *Mr. Paine's* remarks on the languages of the ancients† can be thought worthy of any ani-

* Concerning whom *Bolingbroke* says, vol. iii. p. 343. of the quarto edition, thus: "Some have run—into *atheism*; and, for fear of being imposed on by others, have imposed on themselves.---We may think freely, without thinking as licentiously as *divines* do, when they raise a system of imagination on true foundations :---or as *atheists* do, when they attempt to demolish the foundations of all religion, and reject demonstration."

† Page 65, and the following.

madversion as we pass. I observe, however, that as all men have not that docility and humility of mind, which is essential to an acceptance of *Christianity*, but wrap themselves up in a ragged cloak of ignorance and self-sufficiency; so neither have all that sensibility of perception, and that elegance of taste, which is necessary to a relish of the inimitable beauties of ancient composition. I *may* be, for example, a delicate bird, delighting in strawberries and the choicest fruits: *Thomas Paine*, a crow; who prefers carrion and putrescence, and finds a feast in a rotten carcase. The genius and faculties of men are diversified with infinite shades of texture: and it seems to be the duty of every individual to prosecute that branch of literature, with peculiar devotion, for which nature has peculiarly fitted him, as likely to promote thereby with the most successful efficacy the general improvement of the species. Poetical inspiration and the powers of eloquence could not be given by God without some wise intention, with respect both to the professor and mankind at large.

Nec tua laudabis studia aut aliena reprendes,

is a sensible and valuable maxim of an *Augustan* poet. The compositions of the *Greeks* and *Romans* stand as yet unrivalled in the universe; and their admirers are much confirmed in their attachment

tachment, when they perceive their censurers to be those, who know little, or nothing, of the subject themselves, and scruple not to incur an imputation of most shameless and contemptible impertinence for so irrational an interposition of their judgement. Besides, I have not yet discovered, that the best philologists are, in general, inferior in any *other* branch of knowledge to the wise-acres, who undervalue these attainments: but undervalue them, merely because they have not the means of acquisition. Have the cultivators of the languages superiour vigor of natural powers, therefore, to other men? By no means: but their youth has been happily exercised by those pursuits, in which youth can only be occupied, very generally speaking, with complete efficiency. In all that *Mr. Paine* has said on this subject, I discern little more than a collection of ignorance, misconception, effrontery, and insipidity, unbecoming a man of his honesty and intelligence. "Whoever*" (I am quoting the words of an incomparable man, *Bishop Hoadley*, in his second charge to the clergy of *Sarum*) " whoever contemns, or
 " brings a disgrace upon that critical or philolo-
 " gical learning, which is of infinite advantage
 " in making the words of antiquity useful; or
 " upon any other kind indeed, but what leads to

* Hoadley iii. 486.

“ darkness instead of light, or to vice instead of
 “ virtue; deserves justly to be himself branded
 “ with the name of an enemy to the improvement
 “ and glory of the Humane Understanding ; and
 “ to be treated as one, who only seeks to revenge
 “ his own ignorance upon the learning of others.”

Mr. Paine proceeds :

“ The event that served more than any other
 “ to break the first link in this long chain of des-
 “ potic ignorance, is that known by the name of
 “ the reformation by Luther. From that time,
 “ though it does not appear to have made any
 “ part of the intention of Luther, or of those who
 “ are called reformers, the Sciences began to re-
 “ vive, and Liberality, their natural associate, be-
 “ gan to appear.”

The *reformation* arose from an insight into the
 corruptions and absurdities of *Popery*, in conse-
 quence of a freedom of enquiry already commen-
 cing, and an increasing conviction of sottish servi-
 vility, disgraceful to a rational being, in a sub-
 mission of the understanding to the arbitrary dic-
 tates of a spiritual usurper. The *reformation*,
 therefore, by *Luther* was only *one* physical circum-
 stance in the recovery of the natural right of man,
 to think and determine for himself, amidst a gene-
 ral operation of causes for the melioration of human
 life.

life. But the subsequent benefits of the *reformation* were momentous and extensive; particularly by removing those apprehensions of personal danger, which debarred all progress to true philosophy in countries, where the *Papal* domination was established. And surely it forms no mean presumption in favour of the reasonableness of Revelation, that the restoration of true science and the rectification of evangelical religion should be congenial and contemporary; that the beams of knowledge should dispel the damps and darkness of ignorant superstition, but contribute illumination and vigour and stability of evidence to the sincere gospel of *Jesus Christ*. The most distinguished mathematicians and philosophers of our own country; men, whose intellectual powers are transcendentally conspicuous among the most exalted energies of human genius; *Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Locke, Barrow* and *Hartley*, have been the firmest believers of the *Christian* revelation: and not *passive* educational believers merely, accepting with implicit acquiescence the traditionary creeds of their teachers; but strenuous assertors and most able vindicators of the authority, the importance, and rationality of the *gospel*. I would recommend to the notice of *Thomas Paine* the following passage in the life of *Emlyn**: *Dr. Halley*, said *Sir Isaac Newton*, I am always glad

* See my Evidences, Remark xxxix.

“ to hear you, when you speak about *astronomy*,
 “ or other parts of *mathematics* ; because that is a
 “ subject you have studied, and well understand :
 “ but you should not talk of *Christianity*, for you
 “ have not studied it. I have ; and know you
 “ know nothing of the matter.”

I have now finished my remarks on this pamphlet of *Thomas Paine* ; which have been extended thus far, more in deference to the deserved celebrity of the man, than the powers of the disputant : nor am I conscious to myself of eluding any difficulty, or shrinking from the terrors of a single argument directed against the authenticity of revealed religion, in the course of this examination ; but, to the best of my ability, a concise answer to every objection, not completely puerile and impertinent, has been specifically given, or is virtually included in this series of observations. Nor, in conclusion, will I dissemble one of my most urgent inducements to this publication to have been, an ambition to declare before the face of my fellow-citizens in the most unreserved manner, that one, in the midst of a general obloquy on reformers, as infidels and atheists, is indeed a zealous advocate for *Christianity* ; but, as becomes the disciple of a *lowly* and pacific master, who regarded no man's *person*, with as warm an enthusiasm for the universal equality and the unalienable rights

rights of man, as ever actuated the breast even of the "hallowed MILTON." The more perilous the times, with the more animation will a genuine votary of a crucified Saviour, who "looks for a better country, that is, a heavenly*," feel himself impelled to a bold and open profession of the practical principles of religion; the principles of LOVE, PEACE, and LIBERTY, without distinction and reserve, to the whole human race. This is the profession of our faith before atheists and unbelievers, before *principalities* and *powers*, before ministers and kings: from this profession, neither shall shame seduce, nor danger terrify. It shall be our guide through life, our support in death, and, we trust, our recompense for ever!

I implore, finally, the omnipotent Controller of events, who "ruleth in the kingdom of men and "giveth it to whomsoever he will †," to consider his creature man in this most momentous crisis of our affairs! to stem the torrent of human blood, which is deluging the earth, at the will of *Christian* kings, beyond all example in the most ferocious ages of heathenism and barbarity!—to confound the devices of all sanguinary destroyers of mankind, combined against liberty, knowledge, and human happiness; the true "synagogues of Sa-

* Hebrews, xi. 16.

† Daniel, iv. 32.

tan *"; and to turn their hearts!—to annihilate every sentiment of national hostility in every breast; that the horrid circumstances of war and slaughter may no where exist, but in the bloody page of history, as awful memorials of savage unregenerated man!—to regard the sorrows of the distressed *African*; and to compensate with ages of consolation “the years, in which he has seen adversity†!”—to confirm and comfort the glorious martyrs of truth, humanity, and freedom, whether in bonds or exile; to multiply the number of their followers, that rising generations may call them blessed!—to overpower the delusive flame of infatuated superstition, engendered in the putrid sink of priestcraft, tyranny, and persecution, by the predominant radiance of the sun of righteousness, the pure and undefiled religion of *Jesus Christ*!—to consolidate all flesh with the cement of evangelical fraternity§ and benevolence! to harmonize all hearts with the sympathetic influences of “unity, peace, and concord!”

* Revelations, ii. 9. † Psalm, xc. 15.

§ Matthew, xiii. 50. xxiii. 8.

HACKNEY, May 8, 1794.

A
SHORT REPLY
TO
A LETTER
FROM
DAVID ANDREWS:
IN
VINDICATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

— οὐδ' οἱ αἰδώς
γίνεται, ἢ τ' ἀνδρᾶς μέγα γίνεται, ἢ δ' οὐκ ὄννῃσι.

HOMER.

Est aliud genus hominum, qui quanquam cum indoctis disputare neque soleo neque hominis sapientis esse puto, tamen, quoniam timeo quomodo se negligi ferrent, paucis redarguendi sunt.

THIRLBII præfat. in Justin. Mart.

FOR THE

ALBERTA

FROM

AND

THE

THE

A

SHORT REPLY, &c.

EARLY in the present year, I endeavoured, amidst political gloom and danger, to calm the ferocious dispositions of my countrymen, and to shew the inconsistency of our political measures of slaughter and extirpation with every principle of religion and benevolence, in a small pamphlet entitled "The Spirit of Christianity compared with the Spirit of the Times." On one hand, the indignation of *Aristocracy* and *Church-mummery* was excited, and vented itself with its usual licentiousness in that sink of literary profligacy the *Gentleman's Magazine*; accompanied by a pamphlet from an anonymous coadjutor of despotic and sanguinary superstition, addressed to *Mr. Wyndham*, but written by a young gentleman, whose premature engagement in hostilities with *humanity* and the *gospel*, would be more properly recompensed by pædagogical flagellation, than a serious reply in writing;

Majores nusquam ronchi : juvenesque, senesque,
Et pueri, nasum rhinocerotis habent.

The good sense, however, and candour of some *reviewers*, unknown to me, sufficiently vindicated my cause against the feeble operations of that inglorious antagonist. On the other hand, where my political tenets found acceptance, my belief of the *Christian* revelation was a subject of admiration and regret to a writer under the fictitious name of *David Andrews*.

———— hâc urget lupus, hâc canis, aiunt.

With this antagonist, so immoderately scandalised at my credulity, it is my intention to exchange a few words on this occasion ; nor am I solicitous of more deference and ceremony in this address, than comports with the respectability and decorum of his attack, (which nothing can exceed in roughness) and the undisguised frankness of my own nature.

This writer, whose object is nothing less than the disparagement and subversion of *Christianity*, as a senseless and wicked system, begins his argumentation by stating the dependence of the religion of *Jesus* on the *Mosaic* institution ; and, upon the strength of this undeniable proposition, employs nearly *two-thirds* of his pamphlet, with no
great

great consistency, in combating, not the *evidences* of *Judaism*, (no! learning and reflection would be necessary there) but *solitary facts* in the *Jewish* history. To refute the censures of an author (whom, notwithstanding his applause and approbation of my conduct, if I could call otherwise than *ignorant* and *conceited*, without further proofs of his knowledge upon the subject in question, I should detest myself, as a hypocrite and a liar—as one, who would overlook, from the delusions of personal vanity and absurd candour, the immutable distinction between vice and virtue, whether in letters, or in life*) to refute the censures, I say, of *such* a writer, one or two general observations will suffice.

That the compilers of the *Old Testament* did not intend to hold forth the leading characters in those books, all the *Patriarchs*, for example, *Sampson*, *Saul*, *David*, *Solomon*, and others, as perfect patterns of moral excellence for the imitation of mankind at large, is sufficiently demon-

* “ If men will be for removing foundations, and denying the principles of religion, it is fit they should be told, that there is neither wisdom nor learning in this; and those, who are acted themselves by a spirit of contradiction, have the least reason of any men to take it amiss to be contradicted, though it be in never so plain a manner.” *Jenkin on Christianity*, preface to vol. i. p. xli.

strated

strated by that impartial relation of their *vices* also; upon which our *David Andrews* descants in a style so tragically pathetic. The mere *historical* parts of the *bible* should be regarded as a chronological collection, marked by reigns, offices, and extraordinary facts, of *national annals* only: and what stronger presumption can we have of the *general veracity* of writers, than from an undisguised display of the grossest enormities in those very characters, who, in other respects, are esteemed the flower and glory of their nation? As this argument has been already advanced in the preceding pages, upon the subject of *Mr. Paine's* pamphlet, I shall urge it no further here. It is as simple and cogent as can be wished.

If *David Andrews* had shewn from the genuine records of other nations, from the creditable testimony of ancient writers, from the external circumstances of different countries, their chorography or their population; from the moral and intellectual conditions of mankind, either now or at any given period, that the birth of our species, the commencement of society, the acquisition of articulate language, or the invention of alphabetical characters, were totally subversive of the origin of the world, and the date of that origin, as stated in the *Mosaic* history, or materially

terially inconsistent with it; he would then have opened a source of disquisition, which Philosophy and Learning might have traced with pleasure and advantage in it's progress: but surely, surely, genius and letters will acknowledge no obligations to a scribbler, who serves up the stale trivial objections of infidelity, with a small aspersion of wit and no reading at all, to his fellow-citizens, at this time of day! It is the same thing, as if a sciolist philosopher, in the stiffness of mathematical precision, should dispute the *sphericity* of the globe, as demonstrated in the *Newtonian* theory of gravitation, because of the protuberances occasioned by *rabbit-burrows* and *mole-hills* upon it's surface. While grand leading truths are unaffailable; truths, connected with the general history of man and the fates of nations, we can easily reconcile our minds to individual difficulties of a less striking complexion: to difficulties, which become such from causes of ignorance wholly inevitable, amidst a wreck of historical records, at this distant period, rather than from a real validity in the objections of our opponents.

Many laws and many precepts under the *Mosaic* system are not defended by the patrons of revelation, as absolutely perfect, and intrinsically excellent; but as wisely calculated to the degree of political

political refinement, and to the moral advancement of men, at that æra of the world. Mankind has it's infancy and order of progression, like individuals: and what judicious preceptor will not adapt his instructions to the different ages and capacities of his scholars? Revelation is the lecture of God; and must be accommodated of necessity to the qualifications of it's disciples: *Judaism*, for the child; *Christianity*, for one that is putting away childish things. "That was not first (to use the words of an *Apostle*) " which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and, afterwards, " that which is spiritual." There is no subtlety and mysticism in this species of argument; but positions, consonant to the practice, and level to the capacities, of every rational existence.

In the remarks on the *gospel* scriptures, I can discover nothing, relative to the general evidence of *Christianity*, of more importance, than the former part of the performance respecting the writings of the *Jews*. Particular incidents, recorded in the *gospel*, may readily be given up, if necessary, as surreptitious interpolations of fanatical credulity, or pious fraud, without prejudice to the domineering facts and the grand purport of those histories: just as, for example, in *Cæsar's Commentaries*, a variety of occurrences, related to him by
his

his officers, lieutenants, messengers, and others, can scarcely be otherwise than *inaccurate*, and may be altogether *untrue*, without impairing the main credit of that volume, as genuine memoirs of the military exploits of *Cæsar*, composed by himself; much less without annihilating the particular expeditions and more prominent transactions commemorated there. Nay, with respect to the *Trojan* war itself, though the *Iliad* be replete with adventitious ornaments of poetical invention, what sceptic will call in question the substance of that poem, or the principle events, on which that poem is grounded; the combination of the *Greeks*, their generals, the ten years' war, and the final desolation of that city? This is manifest beyond dispute, and will excuse further illustration.

But I perceive myself to be misemploying my own time, and that of my reader; and will sound a retreat. If *David Andrews* be resolved, by all means, to batter down the edifice of the *Christian* Church, and not merely bespatter with filth "*the polished corners of our temple*;" let him provide, without delay, the heavy artillery of mature reflection and solid erudition, for a fresh encounter. At present, the modern *David* cannot be deemed a formidable adversary against this ancient and stable fortress of Faith and Hope, unless our in-

M

tellectual

tellectual optics should haply, by dimness or distortion, acquire such a perverse faculty of exaggeration, as to see a *forty-pounder* in a *pop-gun*, and a *mortar* in a *p——p——*

Demetri, teque, Tigelli,
Discipularum inter jubeo plorare cathedras.
I, puer, atque meo citus hæc subscribe libello.

THE END.

